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**PORTRAIT: MRS. GEORGE
 COLLINS
 By GORDON STEVENSON**

*—Courtesy W. Scott Thurber
 Galleries*

Important Exhibitions at the Galleries

By THE EDITOR

ANYONE who is interested in portraits—and who is not?—should not fail to see the Gordon Stevenson exhibition at the W. Scott Thurber Galleries. With the showing of this collection Chicago witnesses the rising of a new star in its artistic firmament and thrills to the pleased realization that it is to be a brilliant one.

The ten portraits in this exhibition are mostly of young people. They are the works of a young man which perhaps may, in some measure, account for the prevailing impression of vitality and vivacity. One would say that these portraits were char-

acteristic examples of American art, so truthfully do they reflect our national characteristics, were it not that further observation serves to reveal them as faithful pictures of Americans rather than as essentially American pictures.

The art of Mr. Stevenson is indeed most cosmopolitan, as might be expected from his ancestry, his birth place, environment and training. Scotch by direct descent, the heritage of his blood is seen in the fine balance and vigor of his work. American by birth and education, he has a certain freedom and freshness of expression, a sweep and dash that are not unlike the spirit of

**PORTRAIT: ALBRECHT,
GRAF VON MONTGELAS
By GORDON STEVENSON**

—Courtesy W. Scott Thurber
Galleries



the country. Training, however, has added another element, Spain and the great master, Sorolla, under whom Mr. Stevenson was privileged to study, having contributed richness of color, beauty of design and the quality of romance. Through travel on the continent and the British Isles these elements have been refined and unified by observation and reflection.

The result is that Mr. Stevenson paints as he sees, with a true understanding of the

individual and race characteristics of his sitters as well as of their best pictorial possibilities. We should not need a catalog and the clew afforded by names to pick out the one European in this exhibition, even though the subject, like the artist, is cosmopolitan. The very attitude, expression and pose of his portrait of Albrecht, Graf von Montgelas, are continental. The veiled proud eye is not that of the keen, quizzical irreverent Yankee. The non-committal

quality of modern costume might prevent recognition at first sight of the foreign traditions and training which carriage expression, however, reveal clearly as one studies the work.

The portrait of Valencia Rafferty on the other hand is very much the American girl of the temperamental Celtic type. There is the ease and grace that are of freedom but not of abandon, the beauty that allures while remaining aloof, the pride that is still democratic. The wonderful Chinese coat of pinkish heliotrope with rich embroideries of blue and gold has a fine textural quality and gives a strong decorative feeling to the picture. It makes a gorgeous setting for the pale and auburn loveliness of this slender, graceful girl.

The reflections from the satin give a deeper pink to the delicate fingers of the hand which rests in her lap, and this hand, though broadly handled, is very interesting and a careful bit of painting.

The Orientalism of this robe is appropriate, too, as a possession interwoven with the life history of the daughter of an army officer who has spent a considerable portion of her life in China. Indeed, the artist finds a sympathetic delight in introducing such bits of personal possessions as are most familiar or dearest to his sitters and indicative therefore of their tastes and pursuits. This is partly out of the love of the decorative and partly significant of the psychologist in the painter.

An example of the nicest use of such bits of embellishment is seen in his portrait of Miss Alice Lee beside the cage of her pet bird. A very sensitive spirit, at once gentle but dauntless, shines in the blue eyes of this young girl, who herself possesses a something birdlike. The sympathy between the two friends is a charming note of human interest, while the bright metal of the cage wires and the feathers of the crimson-breasted bird, all broadly suggested with detail that is felt, though not distinctly seen, heighten the decorative effect. One carries

away from this picture an impression of blue and remembers that the expressive eyes which attract and hold the attention were of a singularly clear deep azure. The rolling white sailor collar also affords a glimpse of a little blue necklace, evidently of matrix turquoise.

One of the problems of portraiture, that of emphasizing points of interest Gordon Stevenson has solved as he explains it, by securing stress through design rather than finish. To start with a graceful and well considered design, so arranged that points of greatest interest occupy the most significant positions therein, is a proceeding the logic of which seems self evident. A picture thus planned will, of necessity, draw together better than one in which an intensity of interest at certain points has been sought through a careful and finished method, while the balance of the picture is treated with less exactness.

The charm of the moving line is likewise well understood by this artist, whose pictures could never weary the eye or become monotonous because his well-balanced design keeps the eye moving from point to point, ever finding fresh attractions. An example of this sustained melodic quality is to be observed in the portrait of Mrs. George Collins. The attire of this aristocratic, well-groomed American girl, while tasteful and quiet, might be too conventional for pictorial effect had not the blue velvet evening wrap and white fox scarf been most cleverly handled. The white fur resting high upon one shoulder falls gracefully and naturally from the other and passing around the elbow appears again clasped by the fingers of the hand, which rests in the lady's lap. This is a most simple and natural arrangement and yet a scientific one which the eye follows gratefully, finding a fascination in the little end of fluffy white fur reappearing in the grasp of pink fingers. A beautiful ring upon the other hand, the shadow of the open coat upon the white frock beneath, the tapestry curtain full of

rich dull tones which forms a background for the figure are incidents which lend charm and variety.

The influence of Sorolla is perhaps most strongly suggested in the out-door portrait of Miss Carolyn Walker. The verdant and breezy out doors seems the only appropriate setting for this girlish figure with the bright green coat and Panama hat. Here her youth and high spirits seem most at home and at their best. The light in this picture is peculiar, being that of a grey summer day rather than a sunny one, that intense white illumination of a strong sun veiled by vapors, which seem to diffuse its light in a most penetrating manner. This effect is difficult of representation in a picture, but the task has been well accomplished. There is an interesting reflection on the rosy cheek from the brim of the Panama hat, while the eyes bewitch from beneath its shadows.

Mr. Stevenson has had the benefits of criticisms from Sargent, who warned him against some of the pitfalls of portraiture, especially the tendency, so usual with painters, to make the head too large or the entire figure too dominant for its surroundings. The master's advice to always make the head a little smaller than you think it should be, though it sounds odd, is said to be a reliable maxim for the portrait artist.

The supreme characteristic of Mr. Stevenson's portraits, however, that which gives them their greatest charm and strongest individuality, is their spontaneity. This is their first and most lasting impression and one which is greatly to be desired in a portrait. This spontaneity is real and not a mere matter of seeming, for the artist makes it a principle and a practice to record his impressions completely before inspiration has waned. This he achieves through his manner of finishing a picture. When the work as a whole has been established as to values he takes each part in turn and finishes it at one sitting. If he paints a hand, for instance, he completes it before he lays down his brush, and any part which he cannot complete he finds it advisable to do over

entirely at the next sitting. In this way he preserves the vivacity of first impressions.

That Mr. Stevenson's portraits are faithful likenesses as well as very pleasing pictures would almost be apparent to one unacquainted with his sitters, from the decided individuality of each. We feel that these are real people, not idealizations, for we behold in expression and pose all those subtleties of thought and feeling which are observable in the persons of those about us. He paints men and women equally well, because of his breadth of observation, and the fact that he is not biased by any particular preference for a certain type of sitter or a certain style of picture.

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THE Carnegie Institute, through its Director of Fine Arts, who is at present in San Francisco, concluded an arrangement with Monsieur Jean Guifrey, Commissioner of Fine Arts for France, providing for the exhibition of the entire collection of paintings in the French Section, numbering about two hundred and fifty works, at Pittsburgh, during the months of May and June next; the exhibition to be an important feature of the Founder's Day celebration on April 27th. The Carnegie Institute, in co-operation with The American Federation of Arts, planned, early in the summer, a more general exhibition which should represent the art of the various nations, in a comprehensive but small collection, which collection it was anticipated would go to several important cities. It was discovered, however, that to withdraw from the French Section thirty-two important paintings for which orders had been received, would materially interfere with a plan providing for the exhibition of the entire French Section in Chicago, St. Louis, Buffalo, and other cities, under the management of the Albright Art Gallery, and, therefore, the original plan was abandoned, and the agreement providing for the exhibition of the collection at Pittsburgh, substituted.